



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road  
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Town Clerk (860)441-6640  
Town Manager  
(860)441-6630

## Meeting Minutes

### Representative Town Meeting

**Moderator Natalie B. Billing, Representatives Jean-Claude Ambroise, Joe Baril, Nancy E. Barnhart, Alicia Bauer, Nancy E. Beckwith, Laurie Kim Briggs, Genevieve Cerf, Michael Collins, Warren T. Cooper, Nancy S. Driscoll, Syma Ebbin, June Evered, Peter Fairbank, Melissa M. Finlayson, Irene B. Garagliano, Robert Garcia, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Wendy L. Hellekson, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, James Loughlin, Lisa M. Luck, Jackie Massett, Carole McCarthy, Richard Metayer, Betsy Moukawsher, Scott Newsome, Deborah Peruzzotti, Kevin Power, Betty A. Prochaska, Don Pratt, Jack Sebastian, Jennifer Smuts, Eleanor Steere, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, and Cheryl Tilney**

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Wednesday, March 18, 2009

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex-CR1

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#### Regular Meeting

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#### A. ROLL CALL

*Moderator Natalie Billing called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.*

*23 members were present, and a quorum was declared. (Rep. Ambroise arrived at 7:36 p.m.).*

*The Moderator reported that Reps. Cooper, Fairbank, Hubbard, McCarthy, Moukawsher, Power, Pratt, Prochaska and Svencer called to say they are unable to attend this meeting.*

*Members Present: Moderator Billing, Rep. Ambroise, Rep. Baril, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Briggs, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Collins, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Evered, Rep. Garagliano, Rep.*

*Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter and Rep. Tilney*

*Members Absent: Rep. Cooper, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Finlayson, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Hellekson, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Metayer, Rep. Moukawsher, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Steere and Rep. Svencer*

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, School Superintendent Paul Kadri, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.*

#### B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

*The members observed a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag led by Rep. Collins.*

#### C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 17, 2008

*A motion that the minutes be adopted was made by Rep. Steinfeld, seconded by Rep. Bauer.*

*The motion carried 20 in favor, 3 abstentions. (Abstaining: Reps. Peruzzotti, Sebastian and Streeter.)*

#### D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

*None.*

#### E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

*Moderator Billing informed members that Kenneth Guilfoil, a former RTM member who served from 1979-1981 had recently passed away. She expressed condolences to the family.*

*The Moderator noted that copies of her response to an email received from Ed Johnson concerning the Town and Board of Education (BOE) budgets are available at this meeting.*

*The Moderator announced that Rep. Bergeson resigned leaving a vacancy in District 1 and that she is aware that Rep. Finlayson has moved out of town but the Town has not received an official resignation from her. This would leave a vacancy in District 5.*

#### 1. Introduction of Superintendent of Schools Paul Kadri

*Moderator Billing introduced and welcomed Mr. Paul Kadri, the new School Superintendent.*

Mr. Kadri provided information on his background and previous work experience before starting his education career. He noted that he is familiarizing himself with Groton's RTM form of government. He talked about the need for communities to blend education excellence and fiscally sustainable taxation. His philosophy to attain this could be named "efficient excellence". He feels that the BOE is entrepreneurial and receptive to creative thinking, and he sees innovation among the Education staff. He is open to discussion and suggestions from individuals and groups which may create an excitement from the community for the schools. He feels this will benefit both the students and the community. He reported that he is discussing with the BOE the future configuration of the schools from Kindergarten through Grade 12. He acknowledged that recommendations for the design of the school system by the School Design Committee Phase II will affect the next two generations. He extended an invitation to members to meet with him if they have any questions or concerns.

In response to Rep. Sebastian, Mr. Kadri feels he has a wonderful connection with the BOE but he believes in data-driven decision-making, roles, responsibility and fiscal accountability.

Rep. Cerf thanked Mr. Kadri for coming and for his enthusiasm. She stated that at a future date she would like him to discuss his ideas and priorities for the school system, what needs improvement, and what will move the schools dynamically forward.

## **F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER:**

### **1. Financial report**

Mr. Vincent reported that the Unreserved & Undesignated Fund balance as of July 1, 2008 is approximately \$11.0 million; the General Contingency balance is \$350,000; the Capital Reserve balance is \$1,777,626.

Mr. Vincent stated that the fourth quarter transfer process is beginning. He expects that Public Safety and Public Works functions will be requesting transfers. He stated that the transfers from General Contingency are necessary due to the numerous snowstorms this winter.

He reported that the Noank Aquaculture Cooperative has been very successful. The Cooperative is expanding its educational programs that will train students and inform shellfish managers and entrepreneurs how to create a successful hatchery business.

### **2. Monthly briefing**

The Town Manager mentioned numerous articles that appear in the Town Manager News. He reported that the temporary Senior Center at the former Noank School is up and running smoothly. He announced the appointment of Betty Anne Reiter as the new Director of Library Services. He stated that the Council has set the Public Hearing for the 2010 Proposed Budget for March 30, 2009 at 7:00 p.m at the Town Hall Annex.

Mr. Oefinger reported that he used the Governor's proposed budget figures issued in February as a starting point for revenue projections in the Manager's proposed budget. He stated that he does not have the confidence that he has had in the past for the revenue projections. He mentioned that next month he may have more information that would assist in the revenue projections. He noted that the Governor had indicated she will not balance the budget by reducing money to municipalities this year but that next year the Town is projected to receive \$700,000 less.

The Manager noted that tax collection is at 94.5% which is 1% above the same time last year. He reported that the Council is discussing the reuse of the schools that have been turned back to the Town.

In response to Rep. Sebastian's email, the Manager spoke about Town investments. He noted the numerous revenue changes to the Town's investments are due to the current economic situation and elaborated on the effects to the Other Post Employee Benefits Trust (OPEB) and the Retirement Fund. He noted that the Town's Retirement Fund decreased from \$85 million in June 2008 to \$56 million as of March 2009. He reported that the OPEB had a balance of \$2.1 million

last year and is \$1.7 million as of March 17, 2009. He clarified that both accounts are in diversified investments with percentages of 55%-45% and 50%-50% to minimize the risk.

In response to Rep. Cerf, the Manager addressed the options of leasing the Colonel Ledyard School property to the City of Groton. He stated he could not identify the specific use intended by the City. He commented that in discussion it was mentioned that the City Police Department may relocate there or it may be used as municipal office space for Groton Utilities. He mentioned that the building may be replaced with a new Police facility.

In regard to Eastern Point School he stated that funding for Project Learn is from the State.

In response to Rep. Cerf about the Retirement Fund, he clarified the Town's past and future approach to funding this account and OPEB. He noted that bond rating agencies would take notice of any changes to the funding of these accounts.

## G. LIAISON REPORTS

### 1. Town Council- Rep. Peruzzotti

Rep. Peruzzotti summarized the numerous Town Council Committee of the Whole meetings that were held with department heads to address the various budget scenarios for a zero, -3 and -5% budget and to identify how the scenarios would impact each department. She mentioned that a public hearing concerning the disposition of the Eastern Point School property and the reuse of Colonel Ledyard School property has been set for Tuesday, April 7, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Hall Annex.

She listed the following items that have been approved by the Council over the past several months: ICMA Public Library Innovation Grant, policy concerning disposition of foreclosed properties, revised engineering costs for the Mystic Streetscape project, Mortimer Wright Preserve Trail Proposal and the negotiations to lease the Colonel Ledyard property to the City of Groton.

### 2. Shellfish Task Force- Rep. Ebbin

Rep. Ebbin reported on the quarterly meeting held on January 12, 2009. She noted that Konover Acquisition LLC has dropped their Walmart project and participation in the lawsuit against the Town's Inland Wetlands Commission for denial of that project. It was mentioned that the Town should use this window of opportunity to get new zoning regulations in place to provide better protection to the reservoir.

She noted that the Groton Shellfish Commission wants to protect water quality in small saltwater estuaries. The Commission wants to improve the Town Zoning Regulations to protect and limit runoff of pollutants. She stated that water quality runoff should meet State Water Quality Limits for shellfish.

The task force discussed the issues involved with dredging Mumford Cove and the request to Groton City Utilities that they not cut the grass around the water utility facility in order to dissuade geese from accessing this area.

## H. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### 1. FINANCE

#### a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Granatosky

Chairman Granatosky read the minutes of the meeting held on March 3, 2009. (Minutes are attached.)

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Granatosky, seconded by Rep. Collins and so voted unanimously.

2009-0040

#### Reauthorization of School Bonds

#### RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE APPROPRIATION FOR FITCH HIGH SCHOOL

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton (the "Town") approved Ordinance No. 260 at referendum on April 27, 2004, which appropriated \$45,000,000 and authorized borrowing in the same amount for renovations and additions to Fitch High School; and

WHEREAS, Section 8.4.5 of the Charter in effect at the time the Ordinance became effective provided that any appropriation for construction or other permanent improvement which has not been completely expended at the end of five years from the date thereof shall thereupon lapse; and

WHEREAS, the Town Manager has reported that certain additional expenditures remain to be made on the project that cannot be expended by the end of five years from the effective date of the last appropriating ordinance and has recommended that said appropriation be extended by reappropriating that portion of the \$45,000,000 which has not been expended on the effective date of this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the Director of Finance has certified that whatever portion of said appropriation is extended may be financed by grants and Town general obligation bonds previously approved; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the Town to continue the Town's renovations and additions to Fitch High School; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that any portion of said \$45,000,000 appropriation which has not been expended on the effective date of this resolution shall be extended and reappropriated, provided that the total amount expended as of the effective date of this resolution, pursuant to said appropriation under Ordinance No. 260, plus the portion which is reappropriated shall not exceed \$45,000,000.

**A motion was made by Rep. Granatosky, seconded by Rep. Ebbin, that this matter be Adopted.**

*In response to Rep. Sebastian, the Town Manager stated that additional money is not being spent. He mentioned that time delays for the school projects and the fact that the Town Attorney has recommended that an extension should be approved to avoid any problems with State reimbursement. He explained that the projects were approved under the old charter and the Town is making sure not to put the reimbursement in jeopardy since a new charter was adopted.*

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Votes:** In Favor: 22 - Moderator Billing, Rep. Ambrose, Rep. Baril, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Briggs, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Collins, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Evered, Rep. Garagliano, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter and Rep. Tilney  
Opposed: 1 - Rep. Sebastian

**2009-0043**

**Reauthorization of School Bonds - Kolnaski Elementary School**

**RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE APPROPRIATION FOR NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - SOUTHWEST**

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton (the "Town") approved Ordinance No. 258 at referendum on April 27, 2004, which appropriated \$26,100,000 and authorized borrowing in the same amount for construction of a new elementary school to be located in the southwestern part of Groton; and

WHEREAS, Section 8.4.5 of the Charter in effect at the time the Ordinance became effective provided that any appropriation for construction or other permanent improvement which has not been completely expended at the end of five years from the date thereof shall thereupon lapse; and

WHEREAS, the Town Manager has reported that certain additional expenditures remain to be made on the project that cannot be expended by the end of five years from the effective date of the last appropriating ordinance and has recommended that said appropriation be extended by reappropriating that portion of the \$26,100,000 which has not been expended on the effective date of this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the Director of Finance has certified that whatever portion of said appropriation is extended may be financed by grants and Town general obligation bonds previously approved; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the Town to continue the Town's construction of a new elementary school to be located in the southwestern part of Groton, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that any portion of said \$26,100,000 appropriation which has not been expended on the effective date of this resolution shall be extended and reappropriated, provided that the total amount expended as of the effective date of this resolution, pursuant to said appropriation under Ordinance No. 258, plus the portion which is reappropriated shall not exceed \$26,100,000.

**A motion was made by Rep. Granatosky, seconded by Rep. Luck, that this matter be Adopted.**

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Votes:** In Favor: 22 - Moderator Billing, Rep. Ambrose, Rep. Baril, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Briggs, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Collins, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Evered, Rep. Garagliano, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter and Rep. Tilney  
Opposed: 1 - Rep. Sebastian

**2009-0044**

**Reauthorization of School Bonds - Northeast Academy Elementary School**

RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE APPROPRIATION FOR DEMOLITION OF THE FORMER FREEMAN-HATHAWAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FACILITY AND CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ON THE SAME PROPERTY

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton (the "Town") approved Ordinance No. 259 at referendum on April 27, 2004, which appropriated \$20,800,000 and authorized borrowing in the same amount for demolition of the former Freeman-Hathaway Elementary School facility and construction of a new elementary school on the same property; and

WHEREAS, Section 8.4.5 of the Charter in effect at the time the Ordinance became effective provided that any appropriation for construction or other permanent improvement which has not been completely expended at the end of five years from the date thereof shall thereupon lapse; and

WHEREAS, the Town Manager has reported that certain additional expenditures remain to be made on the project that cannot be expended by the end of five years from the effective date of the last appropriating ordinance and has recommended that said appropriation be extended by reappropriating that portion of the \$20,800,000 which has not been expended on the effective date of this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the Director of Finance has certified that whatever portion of said appropriation is extended may be financed by grants and Town general obligation bonds previously approved; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the Town to continue the Town's construction of a new elementary school on the former Freeman Hathaway School property, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that any portion of said \$20,800,000 appropriation which has not been expended on the effective date of this resolution shall be extended and reappropriated, provided that the total amount expended as of the effective date of this resolution, pursuant to said appropriation under Ordinance No. 259, plus the portion which is reappropriated shall not exceed \$20,800,000.

**A motion was made by Rep. Granatosky, seconded by Rep. Briggs, that this matter be Adopted.**

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Votes:** In Favor: 22 - Moderator Billing, Rep. Ambrose, Rep. Baril, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Beckwith, Rep. Briggs, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Collins, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Evered, Rep. Garagliano, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter and Rep. Tilney  
Opposed: 1 - Rep. Sebastian

**2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES**

**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Peruzzotti**

*No meeting, no report.*

**3. EDUCATION**

**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Fairbank**

*No meeting, no report.*

**4. RECREATION**

**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Power**

*No meeting, no report.*

**5. PUBLIC SAFETY**

**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Pratt**

*No meeting, no report.*

**6. PUBLIC WORKS**

**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Collins**

*Chairman Collins read the minutes of the meeting held on February 23, 2009. (Minutes are attached.)*

**7. RULES & PROCEDURES**

**a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Evered**

*No meeting, no report.*

**I. OTHER BUSINESS**

**FY 2010 Budget Discussion**

*Moderator Billing mentioned that a budget orientation session will be set up and she encourages both new and old members to attend. She noted that Town employee benefit costs are not reflected in the individual department budgets but in a separate nondepartmental account (column seven on the comparison by function worksheet that was distributed at this meeting).*

*Rep. Sebastian reported a concern from a constituent who wants the Town to reduce expenditures and avoid any tax increases that will affect fixed income residents. The constituent also expressed displeasure with the Parks and Recreation survey. Rep. Sebastian feels that RTM members become advocates for the respective departments reviewed by the committees and that they historically approve the departmental budgets without reductions. He stated rarely do RTM members vote no when approving the budget. He would like the RTM to adopt a 3% reduction from the Town budget published in today's newspaper, thus eliminating the hours of review by the RTM. He noted that the Manager would then choose what would be eliminated to achieve a 3% reduction. He feels the BOE budget should remain the same as the current year. He believes the Town needs to be run more like a business. He acknowledges that he may come across as angry but he is only expressing how he feels and he noted that many residents have asked him to continue to hold the line on increases that will raise taxes.*

*Rep. Granatosky suggested that members may contact any member of another RTM committee if they have questions about a specific department budget. She explained that this would allow the committee to address concerns during the committee's budget review with the department head.*

*Rep. Loughlin praised the Parks and Recreation Director for arranging free printing and distribution of the "Discovery" brochure of the programs that are provided by the department.*

*In response to Rep. Cerf, the Town Manager clarified that it is difficult to define a grand levy increase. He explained that \$71,300,000 of the current budget is funded by property taxes and that this figure is projected to increase to \$71,500,944 for the proposed 2010 budget.*

*Moderator Billing reported that a chart in the budget book stated that property taxes fund 60% of the current budget and that this figure will increase to 63.4 % for the 2010 budget.*

*Rep. Ambroise mentioned this is his freshman term on the RTM. He commented that he feels that the Town is sacrificing and making changes to operations in light of the current economy. He feels that Town staff are professionals and are doing their job. He stated that the RTM must decide between the Town's wants and needs during the budget sessions.*

**J. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion to adjourn at 9:16 p.m. was made by Rep. Harrell, seconded by Rep. Baril and so voted unanimously.*

*Attest:*

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk  
Clerk of the RTM*

*Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk*